DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 178 864 CS 005 091

AUTHOR Aukerman, Robert
TITLE Reading in Specific Content Areas, Developing a Profile of Problems in Reading in Your Content Area.
PUB DATE Jun 79
NOTE 15p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the West Virginia University Reading Center (1st, Morgantown, WA, June 27-29, 1979); For related document, see CS 005 092

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Content Reading; Elementary Secondary Education; *Needs Assessment; *Reading Ability; Reading Materials; *Reading Material Selection; *Student Attitudes; *Teacher Role; Teaching Techniques

ABSTRACT

Teachers can improve students' content reading by preparing reading profiles in terms of student abilities, instructional material selection, and content learning objectives. These profiles should contain the following elements: orientation questions that give the teachers their present bearings; the identification of the readability levels of textbooks, weekly news magazines, and ancillary materials used in the course; the identification of student reading abilities and learning potentials; the relationships between students' past experiences, their self-concepts, and their attitudes toward the subject; the teacher's own concept of a content teacher's role; the current trends in teaching the subject area; and the reading resources currently available in the content area. As teachers fill in the reading profile for their classes, they begin to see how they can enhance learning, improve performance, develop student thinking skills, motivate students, and effect change in the subject area. (RL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED178864

West Virginia University, Thursday, 6-28-1979
9-10:15 a.m.

READING IN SPECIFIC CONTENT AREAS, (Part 1).

DEVELOPING A PROFILE OF PROBLEMS IN READING IN YOUR CONTENT AREA

Robert Aukerman

There are many kinds of profiles: sketches, maps, diagrams, outlines, etc. They all have one characteristic in common, namely, they provide the viewer with an overall concept of an object, process, idea, or situation, together with details that can be seen in relatioiship to each other. A profile of reading problems has those same features and serves the same purpose. The end objective, of course, is to improve reading. And, today, we are focusing our attention toward providing improved reading achievement (and comprehension) in the content areas. During these few minutes, therefore, I intend to suggest ways you as the classroom teacher may develop such a profile for that very purpose.

Getting Our Bearings

Before we can go somewhere we need to determine our bearings.". a navigation term meaning to find out where we are right now.

The Chinese have a saying that"there are five points on the compass: north, south, east, west, and where you are;"the last being the most important to determine before you set your course for moving onward.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Robert Aukerman
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CS005091

Here are some questions that each content area teacher should answer as the beginning point of the profile:

Where are you right now in your content area teaching? How many are satisfied with what you are doing? How many are happy with the textbook you are using and think it is just great for all students? How many are doing all that can be done to enhance learning?; to improve performance?; to develop thinking skills?; to motivate your young readers?; and to affect change? How many know the potentials of the students in your classes: their IQs?; their reading abilities?; their past experiences?; their needs and ambitions?; their self-concepts and goals ? How many know your students' feelings toward study, reading, and achievement in your subject area? How many think your students this past year did the best they might or could do in your classes?

Aristotle maintained that an individual is ready to learn only "when brought to the point of conscious ignorance." We might restate that this way: "we will learn best that which we have discovered that we need to learn."

Here is an outline that will help you develop a profile of the reading situation in your content subject. If you will fill in this outline, you will have a complete picture of where you are and you will find many hints on where you should be going.

Your Content Area Reading Materials

1. The textbook; Does it Match Students' Abilities?

Can all your students read it successfully? If they can, there is something wrong. It is too easy and no challenge for better and superior readers. Do many of your students find it impossible to understand? Is it too hard? frustrating to many? Is it a joy to read? A bore? A compendium of stark facts that are designed for rote memorization? Is it full of life and zest? Is it written for ninth-graders (or whatever) or is it written like a college text? Is it a solo-text, or do you have several at varying levels of readability (difficulty) ? Why are you using it as the reading medium in your classes?

Take a fresh new look at that textbook.

What is it doing for you ? for your students ? to your students? (especially your disabled readers) ?

On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your textbook for doing the job it is supposed to do ?

2. Your Weekly News Magazine

If you use a weekly newspaper in your classroom, does it cause reading problems? If so, for which students? If so, what kind of problems ? How do you use it? What kind of reading aids does it provide? Why do you use this particular weekly newspaper? Have you used, or do you now use a segment of the local daily newspaper? What problems are inherent in its use?

On a scale of 1 to 10, how does your weekly news magazine rate ?

3. Ancillary Reading Materials

What other reading materials are being used? (Catalogs , manuals, leaflets, directions sheets, units-of-work packets, etc) What reading problems do average or disabled readers have with such materials? Be specific. Generalized statements such as "They can't read them" are not useful in developing a good profile.

Rate these on a 1-10 scale.

4. The Learning Potentials of Your Students

Intelligence

What should you know about each student's learning abilities? Intelligence: where does the student rank in relationship to all others of his/her age? If the disabled reader is in the top quartile, what does that tell you? If the disabled reader is in the bottom decile (10 %) what does that tell you?

Hopefully, you can obtain a computor printout of the intelligence scores converted into IQs, and the reading ability scores. With the help of your school reading specialist, the reading scores (which are meaningless in themselves) must be converted into percentiles.

With that information, here is what you do: Convert the IQs into percentiles using this conversion chart:

CONVERSION TABLE: IQs INTO PERCENTILES

IQ (approximate)	Percentile (approximate)	
130+	97th-99th	
125	95th	
120	90th	(Upper 10%)
115	80th	
110	75th	(Upper quartile)
105	60th	
100	50th	(Midpoint)
95	40th	
90	25th	(Lower quartile)
85	20th	
80	10th	(Lowest 10%)
75	6th	
70	3d	

Source: Reading in the Secondary School Classroom, Robert C. Aukerman, Publishers McGraw-Hill Book Co., New York, 1972. Used by permission.

Note: These are approximations and are plenty good enough for our purposes

Next, divide the list of students inti four parts, with students ranking highest in the top quartile (25%), and those ranking lowest in the bottom quartile.

Administer an appropriate reading test and make a list of students in your class, noting their IQ scores and percentiles, and their reading scores and percentile equivalents -- the latter are obtained from conversion tables in the test manual. The result is as shown in this table:

DATA SHEET FOR THE NELSON-DENNY READING TEST

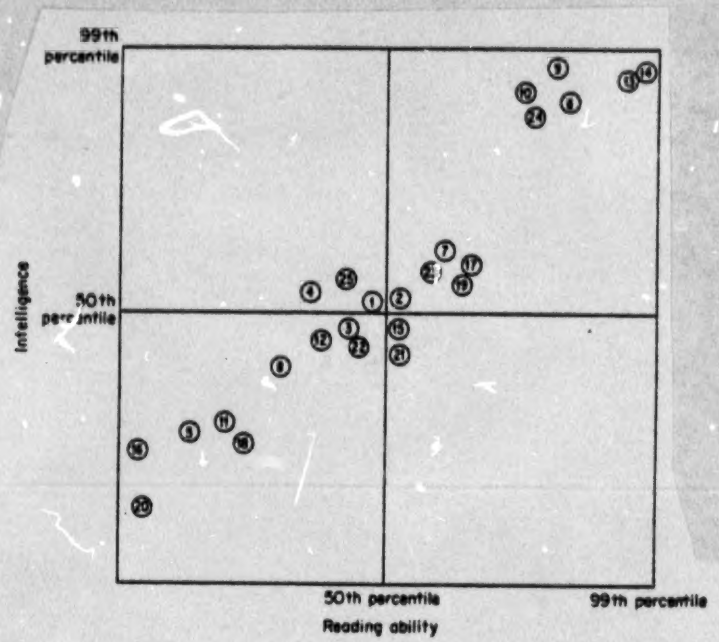
Pupil	Sex	Intelligence		Reading	
		IQ	Percentile	Score	Percentile
1	M	99	49	85	50
2	M	101	51	90	55
3	M	99	49	83	45
4	F	101	52	80	40
5	M	89	24	52	10
6	F	118	88	112	85
7	M	105	60	94	62
8	F	95	40	77	35
9	F	128	96	108	80
10	M	120	90	104	74
11	M	90	25	50	8
12	M	97	44	80	40
13	F	124	94	130	97
14	M	131	98	141	99
15	F	99	49	90	55
16	F	86	21	35	2
17	F	102	54	93	61
18	M	88	23	85	20
19	M	102	57	98	65
20	M	81	12	30	1
21	F	98	42	83	45
22	M	98	47	86	49
23	M	103	58	92	60
24	F	118	87	107	79
25	F	100	50	82	44

Source: Reading in the Secondary School Classroom, Robert C. Aukerman, Publishers McGraw-Hill Book Co., New York, 1972. Used by permission.

Reading abilities: can the student handle main ideas, details, cause-and-effect relationships; implied meanings, references to literary characters, historical events, mythology, or similies and metaphor ? Can the individual who is disabled in reading cope with complex sentences, specific technical and special vocabulary, or long paragraphs? If the disabled reader can only read at third-grade level, how does he/she handle reading assignments in the ninth-grade text ?

The Interaction of Reading Ability and Intelligence

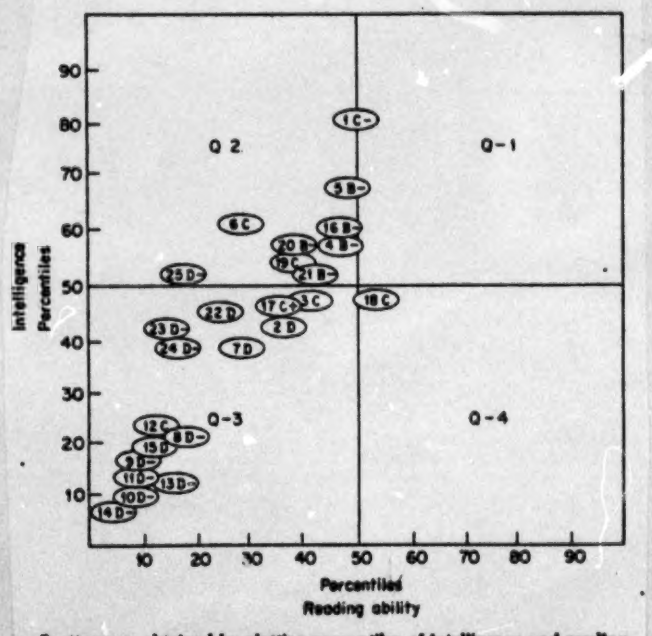
The class profile now can be drawn with these two factors as points of reference. From the chart, we can see that student #1 is just about average (50th percentile) on both reading ability and intelligence. He is placed in the center of the scattergram. Student #2 is also near the center. But student #5, for example is in the lower quartile on both measures. This is how the scattergram shows the profile of this class:



Scattergram showing class profile when percentile data on reading ability and intelligence are plotted.

It should be clear that there are three rather distinct ability groups here.

The profile of another class might be quite different:



Scattergram obtained by plotting percentiles of intelligence and reading for one class.

At this point, the teacher should ask: What reading materials in my subject area must I have on hand to provide success for these varied abilities? Where can they be obtained? How can I organize them for most effective classroom use? How does the textbook fit into the total profile.

We will consider answers to those questions in the afternoon session today.

Past experiences and background in subject: which students have not been exposed to the concepts and vocabulary of the subject even in an elementary manner at any time previous to meeting the subject in your class? Are there any common experiences that you should assume every child has had? Are you certain the disabled readers have had those experiences? Is there a special background of experience beyond common exposure to the facets of our environment that an individual should have to adequately cope with the written materials in the subject ?

Self-concept, attitude toward self and toward subject: Does the disabled reader view himself/herself as already an academic failure? Does the disabled reader approach a new textbook with predestined failure? In what areas does the individual excel and expreience self-satisfaction ? Could those successes be captured and transferred to the subject matter of your class? How does the disabled reader feel when in your class?

Your Concept of Your Role as the Content Teacher

Where are you now as a teacher of subject matter? How do you view your role? Do you differentiate between teaching and learning? What is teaching ? What is learning? Be specific in your answers, otherwise this profile will have serious gaps in it.

Years ago, it is told, that the Burgermeisters of the ancient German town of Nurnberg became disturbed over the inability of school children to learn, so they purchased an invention that was brought to them by one of the wise men of that day. It was a huge funnel, called a "trichner". It was to be used by the schoolmasters for pouring information into the dumkopfs (dumb-heads). This concept of teaching (and learning) seems to persist even today in some places and, indeed, it is said that the Nurnberg Trichner is still an effective audio-visual is Nurnberg.

What are your attitudes toward slow learners ? Are they dumbkopfs ? Would you rather not teach them? Do you understand their self-concepts?

When I first began to teach (It was in Hutchins Intermediate School in Detroit) I was given homogeneously grouped class #13...the lowest possible group in the eighth grade. Lower than that were the educables and the "opportunity room", which was a collection of the society-at-risk children (the potential and already-arrived criminals, many of whom were nephews and nieces of Detroit's Purple Gang.) Lillian Purple was in my group 13 class, however.

Speaking of attitude toward self, all I need to say is that those lowest-group-in-the-eighth-grade kids were quick to alert me as to their status.

Apparently I was using the Nurnberg Trichner when Solly Cohen arose and proclaimed, "Mister Aukerman, you should know that we are the dumbest class that this school ever had, and also you should know that you can't teach us nuttin' ." Applause....

Not only did they believe this, but they set about to prove it !

What do you know about the self-concept of your students?

What Do You Need to Know About up-to-date Goals in Your Subject Area ?

This is the crucial facet of your subject. It requires that you know where your field is going, the directions it is taking, what are those who are leaders in the field recommending, and what is the strategy that is working best with today's youth?

If there were no goal posts at a football or hockey game, there would be no point in the game. What goal posts have you set up for your students?

Where do you find such information? In the reports and yearbooks of the national subject-matter association to which you belong.

Let me give you a very specific example of how goals and objectives completely may change strategies, materials, expectations, and performance.

When I taught the social studies in high school, I drilled my students on the principles of economics (our text was a miniature of that used in freshman college econ classes); I had foolproof objective tests in American History by which I could tell at a glance whether or not the students knew the direct and indirect causes of World War I; in geography, the "in-thing" was to be able to recite the chief products of a nation or to show the geographic influences on the historical events of that nation, and in civics, the stunt was to be able to memorize the names of the President's cabinet .

You may well ask, "Who cares?" and you would be right. But with those objectives as the guiding forces of that day, can't you see how instructional materials, textbooks, and method would all be influenced.

Lets consider the texts of that day: I have already alluded to our economics text , The Principles of Economics; Beard and Bagley's History of the American People , Magruder's American Government, which, incidentally, is now in its unpteenth edition, even though Magruder and his ilk are long gone! (Another proof that, perhaps, the Nurnberg Trichner is still around?)

Are things different today? You bet they are and if you are a social studies teacher, you had better take a fresh new look. Here is what is happening to goals:

In place of memorizing sterile facts, in the social studies there is

"discovery learning"

"problem solving"

"critical thinking"

"inquiry technique"

"investigative study"

" comprehension"

This afternoon, I will tell you how these goals have completely changed the techniques in the social studies and the types of reading materials that are needed to achieve those goals.

<u>What do You Need to Know About Reading Resources in Your Subject Area</u> ?

As new goals dictate new strategies, different reading materials must be assembled as the resources for achieving success for all students, not just the disabled in reading. Here are some questions to be answered as part of your profile:

What reading materials are there on <u>each major</u> unit of study in my subject area ?

How well does the textbook provide ?

What reading materials are available for each major topic for students with low (third-grade, for example) reading ability; or for average reading ability; and for superior reading ability?

What does this mean? It means that, if there are

six units to be covered in your course, you will need to know about high, low, and medium-difficulty materials in each unit; a total of eighteen sets of materials for reading resources.

This afternoon we will talk about what those eighteen sets of reading materials might include. In the meantime, you have an assignment ! You are to be on the alert in your discussion groups and in your meandering through the exhibits to discover just as many reading resources in your subject area and at those three levels of reading difficulty as you can, If you do just this one thing, you will have "gotten something from this conference".

Three additional questions will, when answered, complete this profile:

What additional information do you need to improve your student's ability to read in your content field?

How might you weave some new ideas that you glean from this conference into your daily lesson plans?

and How might you adjust or change your methods, and reading materials to assure optimum success of poor readers, average readers, and superior readers in your classes?

By filling in this profile, you will have taken a giant first step toward enhancing learning, improving performance, developing thinking skills, motivating your students, and affecting change in your subject-matter class. Go forth with this challenge and with these goals.